

THE CLEVELAND
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Thunder from the Heartland: The Great Lakes Jazz Summit continues with
Piano Connection at The Cleveland Museum of Art

The fourth and final concert of the highly popular series, **Thunder from the Heartland**, takes place in The Cleveland Museum of Art's Gartner Auditorium on Friday evening, June 25, at 7:30 pm. In **Piano Connection**, three keyboard masters--Johnny O'Neal, Bill Dobbins, and Neal Creque--bring their unique stylings to an evening of piano jazz. Guests will perform with each trio. Roger Hines (bass), Val Kent (drums), and vocalist Paula Owen will perform with O'Neal; Bill Plavan (bass), Mark Gonder (drums), and Eddie Morgan (trombone), with Dobbins; and Paul Samuels (drums), Chink Stevenson (bass), and Howie Smith (reeds), with Creque.

Thunder from the Heartland: The Great Lakes Jazz Summit is being presented by the Northeast Ohio Jazz Society (NOJS) with the cooperation of The Cleveland Museum of Art, which also hosted the first two concerts; public radio station WCPN-FM; and radio station WNWV-FM. The series showcases Midwestern jazz musicians and composers, affirms Cleveland's prominence as a center of jazz renaissance, and marks the first time the Museum has programmed a major jazz event other than as a complement to a special art exhibition.

The roots of American jazz are in the vocal traditions of West Africans and African-Americans, but much of the music has been composed and performed on the *piano*--an instrument with invaluable percussive, melodic, and orchestral qualities. The piano trio is especially seminal to the evolution of modern jazz, serving as the rhythm section in the small groups that created be-bop; it was the format of choice for such great pianists as Oscar Peterson, Ahmad Jamal, and Bill Evans.

The **Piano Connection** will feature three of the Great Lakes region's own trios, performing in the classic combination--piano with bass and drums--in varied roles:

as a self-contained ensemble, as a format for the piano soloist, and as support and accompaniment to horns and vocalists. Ernie Krivda, the Cleveland saxophonist and composer who is serving as artistic director of the **Thunder from the Heartland** series, regards Bill Dobbins as "the foremost jazz piano scholar in America," who sheds light on the history of his instrument through transcriptions, arrangements, and journal articles. Dobbins is head of jazz studies at the Eastman School of Music, and continues to perform around the world, conduct clinics, and record. Johnny O'Neal, whose virtuoso jazz piano has won this young artist comparison with such giants as Peterson and Art Tatum, has worked with Art Blakey and many of the greats in his home base of Detroit, and is known for weaving gospel and blues elements into his explosive playing. Neal Creque, known to many in the Cleveland area as a fine composer, teacher, and pianist, brings a broad range of influences to his style, including classical music, jazz, and his roots in the Caribbean islands.

Vocalist Paula Owen, joining O'Neal's trio, is a mainstay of the Indianapolis jazz scene; she has worked with Dick Hyman and Lew Tabackin, and recorded on the Cadence label. Eddie Morgan, who will play trombone with Dobbins, frequently performs in Las Vegas and tours with Frank Sinatra; he has worked with other show business superstars from Elvis Presley to Michael Jackson, and with jazz artists Bill Evans, Roland Kirk, Sonny Stitt, Jimmy Raney, Gary Burton, and many others. Howie Smith, composer of award-winning works in the classical and jazz idioms, will play reeds with Neal Creque; they played a starlit concert for 16,000 outside the Art Museum's south entrance during its 75th Anniversary weekend celebration in June, 1991.

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Tickets for this concert are \$7. Tickets are available at the Museum Store and Wax Stacks (on Lee Road in Cleveland Heights), or by phone with a credit card by calling 216/397-9900. General admission; doors open at 7 pm. Parking is free. All four concerts are being recorded digitally for national distribution.

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